

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 SAJ-01 NIC-01 OMB-01 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04

RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 SAM-01 EB-11 IO-14

DRC-01 /149 W

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R 071602Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5995

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMCONSUL LENINGRAD BY POUCH

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 1868

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CU, UR

SUBJ: RAUL CASTRO ARRIVES; PERON LINKS BREZHNEV VISIT TO
U.S. CUBAN RELATIONS

REF: MOSCOW 1739

1. SUMMARY. TWO SOMEWHAT CONTRADICTORY DEVELOPMENTS MAY HAVE BEARING ON ASSESSMENT OF BREZHNEV'S CUBA VISIT. ON ONE HAND, PRESS TAKES NOTE OF PERON JUDGMENT THAT VISIT STEMMED FROM SOVIET GOOD WILL AND DESIRE TO IMPROVE U.S.-CUBAN RELATIONS. ON OTHER HAND, UNHERALDED VISIT BY RAUL CASTRO PUTS DIFFERENT LIGHT ON FAILURE OF BREZHNEV-CASTRO COMMUNIQUE TO REFER TO DEFENSE COOPERATION (REFTEL). END SUMMARY.

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2. CUBAN DEFENSE MINISTER RAUL CASTRO ARRIVED MOSCOW FEB. 6,

ACCORDING TO PRESS. TASS ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS ARRIVAL ON "UNOFFICIAL" VISIT PROVIDES NO INDICATION OF HIS MISSION NOR HOW LONG HE WILL STAY. HE WAS MET BY CC SECRETARY KATUSHEV, WHO HANDLES RELATIONS WITH RULING PARTIES (AND ACCOMPANIED BREZHNEV TO CUBA), DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER PAVLOVSKIY (DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO IS IN BUCHAREST), AND CC APPARATCHIK SHAKHNAZAROV.

3. PRAVDA JANUARY 7 PROMINENTLY CARRIES TASS INTERVIEW WITH JUAN PERON IN WHICH ARGENTINE PRESIDENT IS QUOTED AS SAYING BREZHNEV VISIT WAS "DICTATED BY GOOD WILL AND INTENTION TO ARREST CONTINUATION OF HOSTILITY BETWEEN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRY AND USA." REMAINDER OF INTERVIEW RECOUNTS PERON VIEW THAT BLOCKADE OF CUBA WAS "TRAGIC MISTAKE" IN U.S. POLICY AND HIS BELIEF THAT CUBA MUST AGAIN BECOME A MEMBER OF THE LATIN COMMUNITY.

4. COMMENT. PROMINENT LINKAGE IN PERON INTERVIEW BETWEEN BREZHNEV VISIT AND U.S.-CUBAN RELATIONS IS FIRST SUCH LINKAGE WE HAVE SEEN IN SOVIET PRESS. (PRAVDA WEEKLY INTERNATIONAL REVIEW FEBRUARY 3, IN SECTION ON BREZHNEV VISIT, REFERRED TO CALLS BY SENATOR FULBRIGHT FOR CHANGE IN U.S. POLICY TOWARD CUBA.) EMBASSY HAS DISCOURAGED SPECULATION BY SOME DIPLOMATS HERE ABOUT POSSIBLE SOVIET MEDIATION IN U.S.-CUBAN AFFAIRS. POSSIBLY ONE SOVIET MOTIVE IN FLOATING PERON INTERVIEW IS TO STIMULATE FEARS IN LATIN AMERICA THAT U.S. MAY BE CONNIVING WITH USSR OVER CUBA BEHIND BACKS OF LATIN AMERICAN MEMBERS OF OAS. IF SUCH FEARS EMERGE, SECRETARY MAY WISH TO DEAL WITH THIS ASPECT OF CUBAN ISSUE IN HIS UPCOMING CONSULTATIONS WITH LA COLLEAGUES IN MEXICO CITY.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DETENTE, FOREIGN RELATIONS, ECONOMIC COOPERATION, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION, HEAD OF GOVERNMENT VISITS, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 FEB 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: garlanwa
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974MOSCOW01868
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: n/a
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740249/aaaabtum.tel
Line Count: 92
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: MOSCOW 1739
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: garlanwa
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 MAY 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 MAY 2002 by ifshinsr>; APPROVED <10 JUN 2002 by garlanwa>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: RAUL CASTRO ARRIVES; PERON LINKS BREZHNEV VISIT TO U.S. CUBAN RELATIONS
TAGS: PFOR, CU, UR, (BREZHNEV, LEONID I)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005